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Meeting was fortunate in having present Colonel Playfair, Consul, and Colonel Rigby, our former Consul at Zanzibar, who were both well acquainted with the natives and with the languages on the Somāli coast between Aden and Zanzibar, and could give their views of the probable chances of escape of the Baron and Dr. Link.

COLONEL RIGBY then read the following:—

1. *Report on the Disasters that have happened to the Expedition of the Baron Charles von der Decken.* By Lieutenant the Chevalier VON SCHICKH.

(Communicated by the PRINCESS VON PLESS, through COL. BEAUCHAMP WALKER.)*

THE report which the Chevalier von Schickh laid before the Hanseatic Consul commenced with a few short extracts from the journal of the Baron himself, giving the dates of arrival at the different villages on the banks of the river, and describing the accident which brought the voyage of the steamer to a termination a little beyond the town of Berdera. The extracts commence on August 16th, the day after the expedition entered the Juba. Nothing of importance appears to have happened until they arrived at Berdera. The journal of the Baron then proceeds as follows:—

“About 11 A.M. we passed close to Berdera. Abdio, the two Barakas, and Kero landed to go up to the town, which is somewhat higher on the left bank, in order to procure provisions and deliver the letters of introduction that we had brought. About five o'clock, happily free, I proceeded with Link in the boat to inspect the stream; the steamer followed slowly. On the right bank, at the town,† I was challenged to stop. As there was no good house, I proceeded about 1000 paces further up to the first town on the left bank. Abdio and his associates stood on the shore, but I declined to avail myself of the anchorage pointed out by them opposite the town, as we should there be too much commanded by the hills. Accordingly, we cast anchor close to the exterior walls, exactly opposite the watering-place, where the ground was flat. Groups of inquisitive people remained on both sides of the river, even during the night.

“20th.—Abdio and suite came on board about half-past seven. They had not procured any provisions, but they brought the evidently false intelligence that at only two hours' distance from Berdera the Juba has a great cataract, and that the people of Berdera and Gumana are at war. He is a very useless creature, yielding to every native rumour, and is cowardly beyond measure.

* Translated by S. M. Drach, Esq., F.R.G.S.

† There are two towns at this place, separated by the river.—ED.

I landed at nine o'clock. The sultan, or rather sheikh, is *Hamadi ben Kero*. The most wealthy man is the so-called brother of Sheikh Sigo, of Brava Amri. Both were very polite, and full of pleasant speeches. A bullock was sent on board, and milk, fowls, eggs, and a bag of m'tama [millet], were placed in my boat. The chief of this place appears to be a person of little importance. The information I received, if not very favourable, was at least more encouraging than that which Abdio, who understands the Somāli language, had obtained. They could not, however, describe where the cataract was situated. Hostilities exist between the opposite town and Gumana, but they themselves are in profound peace. The town is surrounded by a wall, ruined in many places, with a moat beyond it. The people are strict Mahomedans, and neither smoke nor take snuff. Even Hamadi ben Kero would not come once into his own house while I was sitting there smoking. The people are armed with spears and very nicely cut rhinoceros-hide shields. One seldom sees bows and arrows, and never fire-arms. Their hair is parted, but sometimes it is allowed to grow long and hangs down about a foot in length all round the head. An arrow-shaped comb is sometimes stuck into it.

"21st.—Went, at 9 A.M., with Abdio and Amio to the town on the right bank. The chief and inhabitants were friendly; they had goats killed for the people with me, and presented me with an ox. It was quite impossible to effect any barter with them, although they offered goats for sale. For a sheep they asked four dollars, and other things were proportionately dear. In the afternoon again went to the town; for to-morrow a hunting-party has been arranged, and for the day after an excursion to the cataract. There was a report in the town that a second steamboat was ascending the river, and had already passed the Wasegua villages.

"22nd.—In the morning early went hunting; later we went to the town. The people on the other shore had crossed over with their sheep and goats to bargain afresh. Naturally, another failure. I committed the great fault of telling the people that I would not allow myself to be cheated, and that they were as bad as thieves in thus raising their prices; but, to show them that I did not care for the cloth, I gave a piece to each of the two chiefs. Abdio again behaved so stupidly to-day that even Kero came to me, and said that through his foolish conduct some unpleasantness would arise with the people.

"23rd.—Yesterday, Hamadi ben Kero had promised to give us from eight to ten bags of m'tama [millet]. I told Abdio to receive them, but, with his usual abominable indolence, he preferred en-

joying himself instead of doing my work; therefore, neither chief nor m'tama appeared to day. Amio, who in spite of all his fine words makes common cause with the others and Abdio, is no better. During our stay here he bought only a single sheep, while I bought three, and at a cheaper rate than his. In the afternoon, when I went into the town to measure the m'tama which had been cleaned by the people, I was informed that Hamadi ben Kero had given orders that no provision should be sold to the Europeans, and Abdio came to me with a verbal message that the Sultan wished me *bon voyage*.

"I returned on board with all my people, who had been in the town, and sent Abdio on shore to bring Amio, who generally manages to keep away when any unpleasantness is apprehended. After an hour Amio really did come on board, and declared that he had business which would take him away from the town for a few days, that he knew nothing of the affair, and he offered himself to procure the desired provisions. He further said that Hamadi, though he was sultan, had not the power to give such orders, and that he himself, being a Brava man, was the equal and superior of the sultan, who was but a simple Somāli. He promised to bring sufficient provisions on the morrow, and to force Hamadi to apologise. I therefore left him unfettered.

"24th.—Went on shore at 9 A.M., when I found three oxen; one was to be given to me as a present, and the other two for a consideration. I also got 100 measures of m'tama in the village. In the afternoon Hamadi ben Kero came to ask pardon; he gave no reason for his behaviour of the previous day, except that he thought the devil had possessed him. He placed his turban on the ground, and offered his hand to me in token of reconciliation: this, however, I refused to accept, to his great astonishment, as he thought he was doing me an honour.

"I sent, through Abdio, a present to the sultan and to Amio: to the former eighty yards of American cloth, and to the latter five dollars.

"25th.—We left at 6 A.M. As might have been expected, the bullock and cow left on shore did not come on board. At about 11·8 A.M. we cast anchor on account of the rapidity of the stream.

"26th.—Started about 2 P.M., and when directly below the rapids, although we were going so slowly that we were hardly conscious of being in motion, we struck a rock, and immediately afterwards our stern struck on another. The engineer, Kanter, called out immediately that the ship had sprung a leak, and we saw the water rushing in under the boiler. After bringing the large boat from the

island we commenced to unload, and by 5½ P.M. most of the cargo was on shore. Link, Trenn, Kanter, and Brinlemann slept on shore with six men and the dogs, to guard the goods and the sheep.

"27th.—I must say I think all we can do will be lost labour, and I give up the *Welf*. The only use we can now make of her is to break her up and construct a raft. We pitched nine tents on shore.

"After mature deliberation and consultation I have resolved on the following plans:—To-morrow morning early I will go, accompanied by Link and the guide, in my boat to Berdera. If we should there have authentic news that Livingstone is in the neighbourhood, I shall once again, with his aid, try my luck in the *Welf*. If not, Schickh is ordered to construct a boat with the materials of the broken-up ship. I will send provisions from Berdera to the rapids, and go on foot to Gumana, to see if it will be worth while to continue our voyage on the Juba without a steamer."

The following is Lieutenant von Schickh's narrative of events after the departure of the Baron:—

"28th.—The Baron left at 6 A.M. on the 28th, accompanied by Dr. Link, the Brava chief Abdio, two guides, Baraka and Kero (the last with letters and provisions to enable him to return by the 30th, at the latest, from Berdera), and four of our negroes.

"28th-30th.—On the 28th, 29th, and 30th, we continued to discharge coal and to work at the leak. On the afternoon of the 30th we had finished the unloading and had repaired the leak, but the river had sunk 2½ feet, so that we should have had, at any rate, to await a rise of the water in order to float the steamer.

"October 1st.—On Sunday, the 1st of October, I allowed the people to rest; the expected guide had not returned from Berdera.

"At 1½ P.M., after the negroes' dinner, we saw between the trees, on the other [left] bank, a great number of negroes. Thinking that this was the expected guide, escorted by some Berdera people with provisions, I sent the boat across with eight men and the boatswain. As he remained too long absent I called him back. The Berdera people told him that neither our guide nor a letter from the Baron was there, but that the Sultan of Berdera had sent them to remove our effects to the left bank, as we should be liable to attack on the right one. They gave no news of the Baron. The boatswain estimated their numbers at between one hundred and fifty and two hundred men. This seemed strange, for if the Baron were still at Berdera he would at least have written intelligence about himself; and if he had left Berdera the guide should have returned with a

letter and provisions. I therefore did not send any of our effects to the other bank, but ordered Brenner to cause the men, after their siesta about two o'clock, to fence round our encampment [on the right bank.]

"When the Berdera people saw that we did not act on their advice, first three, then three more, then many others, waded above the *Welf* and the sand-bank between this and the right bank, and thence again called out for the boat.

"I then sent the boat to the sand-bank to fetch some across, and to make further inquiries. On our people asking how many they might take, I allowed them to bring over six. No sooner had the Berdera people heard this than we heard the sound of a horn on the left bank, and from twenty to thirty negroes, with poised spears [on the right bank], rushed between the bushes and tents into the camp. All who were on this side of the camp, including M. Trenn, the artist, were cut off from their weapons and slain. Kanter jumped from his couch. He still had with him the gun which he had used in the morning's hunt; with this he fired two shots, when he also was massacred. Brenner, Theis, and Deppe, who first remarked the assailants on the north side of the camp, seized their guns, and kept up, especially Brenner, a steady fire, and hereupon the assailants retreated to the bushes.

"I now ran to my tent on the south side and fetched my gun and ammunition. Some blacks tried to get hold of the muskets before us, but retreated into the bushes when I attacked them. I then, with the four Europeans and two negroes (the others were either captured, or fled into the woods, or jumped into the stream), proceeded to the beach to get free play for our firearms. Thence we fired some shots at the people on the shore, who waited on the left bank. One jumped into the boat and allowed himself to be carried downwards.

"There was now no time to be lost, as with the boat would be lost our last chance of escape. I sent Brenner with one negro to swim to the *Welf* and bring the small jolly-boat; this he did. The whole party, consisting of five Europeans and seven negroes, got into it and rowed downwards to overtake our large boat. We overtook it at the moment that the Somāli was trying to fasten it to the left bank. A few shots drove away him, as well as the others, into the bush, and we had just time to enter it when the little one, much too small for us, sank.

"We rowed in this boat up to the camp, when I sent Brenner on shore with three negroes to fetch ammunition; the rest of us covered him with our firearms from the boat, as natives were still visible

in the woods. Thence we went on board of the *Welf*. I ordered Deppe to collect the papers, journals, and valuables of the Baron, Brenner to get ready the guns and ammunition, and Theis to look after the provisions. The Berdera people on the left shore had recovered the jolly-boat that had sunk, drawn it on shore, and had now crossed the river in it.

"We had now to consider our future course. Most probably the Berdera Sultan, learning our condition on the Baron's arrival through Baraka, and remembering the nature of his last interview with the Baron on the 24th of September, had put off the Baron for some time with promises; then, after holding a *showri* [or *divan*], either murdered him or at least kept him prisoner. Otherwise it is inexplicable that the Baron had not sent us any intelligence.

"Having then forced the guides of the Baron to acquaint them with the details of our position, or the guides having voluntarily given this information, they had formed their plans. While the guides were with us there were only Trenn, Brenner, and two or three negroes on shore, the others were all working at the *Welf*. The guns, ammunition, most of the muskets, and all the effects were on shore; the *Welf* lay ten paces from the left bank, which there rose to a height of from six to eight feet above her. Therefore they sent the greater part of their men from Berdera (about two hundred) higher up on the left bank: on the right bank there were only from forty to fifty. The former party could fully command the *Welf* from the high bank, whilst it was easy for the others to finish off the two Europeans and three negroes on the shore. On their arrival they found themselves disappointed; we had rested from our labour on account of it being Sunday; we were all on shore, and they could not cross the river, as there is only one ferry which is at the town. Their object therefore was to divide us, so that they might the better carry out their project. But when they saw that we made no preparation to carry out their advice, they waded to the sand-bank and again called out to us to send the boat to ferry them across, so as to strengthen their party on our shore. When I gave orders that only six people should be allowed to enter the boat they gave the signal to attack us, as a longer delay must have made us suspicious. That the attacks from both sides of the river were in concert is evident, since those on the left shore chased our men from the boat and seized it. All our negroes declared the assailants to be Somālis, whom they can distinguish from the Gallas both by their language and general appearance; some even fancied that they recognised Berdera people. After the attack many went in the jolly-boat from the left to the right bank. If, then, the assailants were

Berdera people, it only remained for us to consider whether we should wait a few days longer, to learn, if possible, something of the Baron's fate, or at once break up. As to getting the steamer afloat, that, under present circumstances, with our few hands, was not to be thought of. Still less possible was the scheme of descending the river on a raft. On the other hand, it was certain that the least delay would cause the news of our disaster to precede us, and then we should have to expect hindrances and opposition everywhere on the river. This would not have mattered much so long as we remained *on* the river, but on our arrival at the mouth we should have had to go on shore and surrender ourselves to the tender mercies of the Juba people. Moreover, independent of our own personal safety, the fate of the Baron (if he were still alive) depended on our freedom. For, while the people knew that we remained safe, they would try to escape punishment by preserving the Baron. If we were destroyed it would be easy for them to declare that it was not them, but the Gallas, that had destroyed the expedition.

"Any attempt on our part to ascertain by force the fate of the Baron, or to render him assistance, was impossible, owing to the overpowering numbers of the enemy; neither would an interview have availed us, as neither we nor any of our negroes understood the Somali language. I therefore determined to abandon the wreck and obtain at Zanzibar help, either to afford assistance to the Baron or at least to learn his fate.

"But being desirous not to take such a step on my own responsibility I asked all the others for their advice, and they were unanimously of the opinion that we had no alternative. Therefore, having taken weapons, ammunition, money and valuables in our boat, we again returned to our camp, took in provisions and other necessities, and forsook the locality. We had not room aboard to bring the instruments with us. By rowing day and night with a single pair of oars we managed to reach the mouth by 2 A.M., on the 7th October. We there left the boat, as it would have been impossible to cross the bar. Thence we commenced our journey on foot, in the hope of reaching Kiama, where we hoped to be able to hire a boat for our further voyage.

Fortunately, after four hours' march, we found a dhow at Cape Bissell, manned by four negroes; this I hired, and on the 16th October we arrived at Lamoo, where we got another dhow, which brought us to Zanzibar on the 24th. Here I hoped to find an English or French man-of-war to take me to Brava, whence my intention is to march by the caravan road and obtain intelligence

from Berdera. Disappointed in this expectation I am forced to go to Brava in a dhow." *

Colonel PLAYFAIR said that on quitting Zanzibar he left the political agency in charge of the medical officer, who had since been obliged to go away for the benefit of his health. But before leaving, Dr. Seward had made over his charge to the Hanseatic Consul; and this was the reason why the news of the disaster had reached us through Germany, instead of coming direct to England. Regarding the equipment of the expedition, he might say that it consisted of two vessels; one a large river vessel of 120 tons burthen, drawing perhaps 4 feet of water, the other a steam launch, of from 10 to 15 tons burthen, with an engine of 2-horse power. The launch was lost on the bar at the mouth of the Juba; the other vessel succeeded in ascending the river, as we had learnt from the report just read. Had it not been for the attack on Lieutenant von Schickh the vessel might have gone much further up the river, for they had succeeded in repairing the leak sprung in striking on the rocks. He had the pleasure, whilst at Zanzibar, of living on the most intimate terms with the members of the expedition. The character of the Baron von der Decken is well known to the members of this Society. M. von Schickh, an officer of the Austrian navy, was the second in command, and upon him would naturally devolve the conduct of the expedition in the event of anything happening to his chief. He knew no one who would be less likely to desert his post than Lieutenant von Schickh; and we in London could not form an adequate idea of the difficulties of his position, which rendered his retreat necessary. In the midst of dangers, surrounded on every side by hostile tribes, he had not a single man attached to his party who could speak the language of the country. There was no doubt the tribes among whom they had fallen belonged to the Somālī race. With regard to the assistance given to the Baron von der Decken at Zanzibar, he must confess he was unable to do much himself personally, but he saw an officer in the room, Captain Allen Gardiner, of Her Majesty's Navy, late senior officer on the East Coast of Africa, who had rendered the Baron great assistance, sending parties of men from the vessels under his command to work, in the broiling sun, from morning to night without any protection over their heads. He was sure the Baron and every one in his expedition would gladly acknowledge the great value of the assistance they received from Captain Gardiner. In the fact that the Baron had fallen into the hands of the Somālīs, and not of the Gallas, lay the only ray of hope for his safety. Had he fallen among the Gallas, his fate would have been instant death. The Somālīs are a peculiar race. He had lived for years in close contact with them, and he had known them to perform some exceedingly generous acts. The crews of vessels wrecked on the coast had been treated with the greatest hospitality by the Somālīs, sent from village to village along the coast, and at last had been sent to Aden, or the authorities at Aden had been communicated with, and they had sent means to bring them forward. He remembered on one occasion going to investigate the alleged piratical seizure of a British vessel; upon approaching the shore, a boat full of English sailors came off, and told him they had been wrecked at Rus Hufoon, and had been passed along from village to village, and treated with the greatest kindness by the natives. It was true instances to the contrary had occurred; but where massacres had been committed upon British subjects,

* M. Schultz, the Hanseatic Consul, states, in a brief abstract which he forwarded of the above report, that an English vessel of war had departed from Zanzibar for Brava to aid the travellers, on the 11th of November.

it had in almost every instance been brought about by a misunderstanding on the part of the sailors as to the intentions of the natives. Such was the case when the boat's crew of the *Penguin* were massacred on that coast. He believed Baron von der Decken might still be in safety; but there was no such hope for poor Trenn, an artist of the greatest promise who had endeared himself to all at Zanzibar by his amiability and gentleness; he was one of the first to join that noble army of martyrs who had given their lives for the advancement of geographical science.

The PRESIDENT remarked that the Baron von der Decken had expressed to him his great gratitude to Captain Allen Gardiner, his officers and men, for the assistance which they rendered him at Zanzibar.

Colonel RIGBY stated the River Juba had been hitherto entirely unexplored, and Baron von der Decken was the first European who had ascended any portion of it. All persons therefore interested in the exploration of the interior of Africa must deeply regret the sad termination of the enterprising expedition of this enthusiastic traveller. He did not think there was reason to fear that he had lost his life; the probability is that he is held captive, in the expectation of extorting a ransom. It appears that he left his steamer to proceed to the town of Berdera, which is inhabited by Somālis, and governed by a Somāli Sultan. He (Colonel Rigby) had had some experience of Somālis, and studied their language; they are a very warlike, independent race, strict Mohammedans, and although rude and barbarous, they have many good points. He did not think that Somālis would ever put to death any person who had fallen into their hands. There are several instances, some of which he would mention, of Europeans having been taken prisoners by Somālis, but he had never heard of their putting captives to death; on the contrary, they usually treat such captives with kindness. The Somāli race is spread over a vast extent of country, including the whole of the great angle of the African continent, from Brava to the Gulf of Aden, and to Cape Guardafui. Higher up than Berdera the country is inhabited by Gallas, a savage race, who regard all strangers as enemies; had the Baron fallen into the power of these people there would be little hope of his life being spared. Berdera is the chief town of a considerable State that carries on much trade with Brava, which is also governed by Somāli chiefs, although nominally subject to the Sultan of Zanzibar. American merchants from Zanzibar sometimes reside for several months at Brava, where they procure hides, gums, ivory, &c., in exchange for manufactured goods. The Somālis at Brava have always been friendly to Europeans, and there is every probability of the Baron being rescued through the assistance of the Brava chiefs. Many years ago the boats of the British men-of-war *Leopard* and *Dædalus* were attacked near the mouth of the River Juba, and some of the crews captured. They were released on payment of some arms and ammunition as a ransom. The cause of the attack was that the Somālis, seeing the Europeans digging in the sand for water, imagined that they were digging up gold. Some years ago the boat of an English whaler, which had lost its ship whilst chasing a whale, made the land about 60 miles north of Magadesho; some of the crew perished from exhaustion, the survivors were captured by the Somālis and taken to Magadesho, where they were sold. A Somāli inhabitant of Brava, hearing of this, went to Magadesho and ransomed them, and conveyed them to Brava, where they were kindly treated. There is also very strong circumstantial evidence that the survivors of the crew of the British ship *St. Abbs*, which was wrecked on the island of St. Juan de Nuovo, about 100 miles north of Madagascar, in the month of June, 1855, and which floated up to the coast of Africa near Magadesho, are still held in captivity by the Somāli tribes in the interior of this part, and he (Colonel Rigby) sincerely hoped that Her Majesty's Government might be induced to take measures to procure their release. It might be of interest here to refer to

such knowledge as we possessed relative to the River Juba previous to the expedition of the Baron von der Decken, and which may explain the object he had in view in forming an expedition at so great a cost and with so much resolution to explore this unknown river. In the year 1811, the British Political Resident at Muscat reported to the Government of India that he had obtained information from persons well acquainted with the east coast of Africa that a river of immense extent discharges itself into the Indian Ocean, near the equator, where it is called the "Govinda Khala;" that the length of its course is about three months' journey; that at nine weeks' journey from its mouth stands a large city, called "Gomana," up to which, the river being navigable, immense numbers of slaves, elephants' teeth, &c., are brought down to within a short distance of Brava, to which, the river then taking a more southerly direction, these articles of merchandise are carried overland. In consequence of this information, the Government of India sent a vessel of the Indian navy to search for and explore this river. The vessel, however, was swept to the south of the mouth of the river by the strong current, and anchored at Patta. There the Commander, Captain Smee, was informed by the Sultan that the River Juba or Govinda is of immense extent, that its sources were beyond his knowledge, and that they believed it flowed from the country of the white man. He added that a great many slaves were brought down the river to Brava. Sir W. Harris, during his mission to the southern kingdom of Abyssinia in 1842, also obtained information of a vast river, there called the "Gochol," flowing from west to east through the eastern portion of Africa, and taking its principal source in the highest mountain land north of the equator. Fifteen days' journey south from Enarea it is joined by the "Omo," a large tributary. Sir W. Harris adds that the Gochol is crossed by means of rafts formed of the trunks of large trees lashed together with strips of raw hide. There is no doubt that the Gochol of the upper country is the Juba. The next information we have of the Juba is from Lieutenant Christopher, commanding the Indian navy brig *Tigris*, who visited Brava in 1843, and who is the only European who has ever visited the large river which flows from north to south, inland from Magadesho and Brava, and which he named the "Haines River." He paid a visit to "Giridi," the capital of a powerful Somālī chief; at that time the whole country was in arms to follow this chief to attack Berdera, the people of which had often provoked a crusade by their aggression and plundering propensities, under the pretence of reforming the customs of the people. He adds that the Arabs of the seaport towns favoured the Berdera chief, as he respected their shereefs and sayyids and adopted Arab customs. The Somālīs are passionately fond of dancing, and the chief of Berdera, having adopted the Arab ideas of the exclusion of women, had determined to put a stop to the custom of both sexes dancing together, and within the previous five years at least 10,000 men had fallen in the battles to decide this question. Lieutenant Christopher remarks, that whilst the kingdoms of corresponding latitude on the west coast of this great continent are of that bloody despotic description which savage nations alone submit to, here the government is mild, although, with a moderate computation, deducting three-fourths for native exaggeration, this great Somālī chief could bring 20,000 spearmen into the field, and probably 50,000 if he flattered the more republican districts which nominally own his authority. Although the people of Giridi had never seen a white man before, they treated Lieutenant Christopher and his party everywhere with the greatest kindness and hospitality. Natives who had been in the habit of visiting the Juba at Gowana, assured him that at that point it is twice the width of the Haines River. From the period of the visit of the *Tigris* no British ship had visited the port of Magadesho until he (Colonel Rigby) went there in H.M.S. *Gorgon* in 1861. It is governed by a Somālī sultan; the people were very friendly to us, and appointed an escort

of 200 armed men as a guard of honour to the officers when on shore. The Somälis of this part are the finest race of Africans he had ever seen ; scarcely a man is under 6 feet in height, and they have most beautiful white teeth. Magadesho was formerly the capital of a powerful kingdom ; it was for some time in the possession of the Portuguese, and there are four towers still standing, the remains of Christian churches. The climate of this part is very salubrious, and the natives attain to great age. Lieutenant Christopher says, " In this delightful region all of us felt an elasticity of spirits which will not soon be forgotten." The soil is very productive, the country very populous, and the people industrious. There is a considerable trade from Magadesho to Zanzibar. Caravans also cross to Zeila and Berbera. At Zanzibar he (Colonel Rigby) was frequently talked to by Arabs and Somälis about the River Juba ; they stated that it flows from a large lake or inland sea, about three months' journey from its mouth. He had always considered that the exploration of this river was one of the most desirable points in African geography, because, if it should prove navigable for any distance, it will open a vast country in the interior to commerce ; and should it be connected with any of the great lakes in the interior, water communication might be established, possibly, with the Victoria Nyanza. Had Baron von der Decken's expedition not come to such an unfortunate termination, the question as to the course of this great river would have been solved, and most important addition made to our knowledge of African geography.

Mr. JOHN CRAWFURD asked whether the fact of the Somälis being Mahomedans and the Gallas not, was a sufficient explanation of the superiority of the one race over the other in kindly feelings.

Colonel RIGBY did not consider that religion had anything to do with it. The Gallas are a warlike and vast nation in the interior, and their hand is against every stranger simply because they know strangers only as slave-hunters. The Arabs, the Abyssinians, and the Somälis all hunt them and take them into slavery. The Somälis being Mohammedans could not be made slaves, therefore they had not the same reason for distrusting strangers. The Gallas, moreover, could not distinguish between Arabs and Europeans ; therefore, every white face they saw they took to be Arabs. They are an entirely different race from the Somälis. He knew very little of the Gallas, except from seeing the few individuals who are brought down as slaves. Sir William Harris and Dr. Krapft, who had been on the borders of their country, described them as living under a considerable degree of civilisation, that they had a settled government, and that some portions of their country are governed by queens, who live in considerable state ; and that on the outlying districts the Arabs are always making war upon them to steal and sell them. The consequence is that they look upon strangers with enmity.

The PRESIDENT here informed the Meeting that our Consuls at Zanzibar were in possession of some very curious information respecting the fate of the passengers and crew of the *St. Abbas* East Indiaman, which was wrecked on the Somäli coast eleven years ago, and he hoped to hear something on that intensely interesting collateral subject.

Colonel PLAYFAIR said with regard to the shipwrecked passengers of the *St. Abbas*, he was reluctant to hold out hopes of their surviving to their relatives ; but a singular circumstance had come before him in his consular capacity, which he would read to the Meeting in the form in which he had communicated it to the Government of Bombay at the time :—

" Zanzibar, 15th March, 1865.

" SIR,—A few days ago an Arab merchant, named Saeed bin Mobaruk, arrived from the Banadir or Somäli coast, north of the Zanzibar dominions, with a cargo of hides which he had purchased chiefly from the savage Somäli tribe named Abghal. On loading his boat he was surprised to notice that one of

them was marked with what he rightly conceived to be European letters. He kept it separate, and delivered it to Messrs. William Oswald and Sons, who sent it to me.

"The inscription, as nearly as I can copy it is, 'NEBN.' The first three letters are very distinctly, 'N, E, B,' the last looks like the first three strokes of an 'M,' which had afterwards been spoilt by the addition of a stroke above and below. I cannot form an idea of what these letters signify, but I think there is reason to infer from them that the reports which have so long been in circulation that some of the survivors of the *St. Abbs* are still in captivity amongst the Abghal, are not without foundation.

There appears to be no room to doubt that this inscription really was on the hide when it came down from the interior, as my informant assures me that he saw it, not, indeed, when he brought it, but before it was put on board his boat; furthermore, he says that he saw at least two other hides similarly marked, though, as they have got mixed up with the others, some of which he sold before reaching Zanzibar, he cannot tell what became of them.

"I have made known to him and to others that I would give a reward of 500 dollars for every one of our unfortunate countrymen who should be released through their instrumentality; and Saced bin Mobaruk has promised to return as soon as possible to the place where he obtained the hide in question, and institute inquiries on the spot.

"I think it would be well not to give this subject publicity: the crew of the *St. Abbs* are given up for dead by their friends, and it would be cruel to excite hopes which might never be realised."

He thought that some of the survivors, finding it impossible to communicate with the coast by other means, had hit upon this expedient of writing something on a hide in hopes that it might be seen by some of their countrymen. Before leaving Zanzibar, he spoke to an influential native of Brava, who promised that he would use his best endeavours to trace these men.

Colonel RIGBY said the Abghal Somälis were the very tribe that he had always heard spoken of as being in possession of these Englishmen. An Arab woman who had been in slavery to these people, assured him that there were white men in captivity there. He felt confident there would be very little difficulty in ransoming them.

The PRESIDENT in conclusion, said he could not adjourn the Meeting without reminding them of the noble character of the enterprise which Baron von der Decken had undertaken. The point where his vessel was wrecked was only what might be called the beginning of the expedition. It was his intention to leave his steamer for twelvemonths on the Juba, and to explore the whole of that part of Eastern Africa between it and the eastern affluents of the Nile; and if he was prevented from returning by the same way he hoped to be able to reach the route of Captains Speke and Grant, and descend the Nile. Almost the last words Baron von der Decken said to him, on the eve of his departure, were, that if he did not come out in twelvemonths from the interior with stores of new geographical knowledge, he might be considered by his friends as having perished in the attempt.

Seventh Meeting, February 26th, 1866.

SIR RODERICK I. MURCHISON, BART., K.C.B., PRESIDENT,
in the Chair.

PRESENTATIONS.—*R. W. Jackson, Esq.; T. Valentine Robins, Esq.; Charles H. Gatty, Esq.*

ELECTIONS.—*The Marquis Giammartino Arconati; William Babington,*

Esq.; George Bateson, *Esq.*; Lieut.-Colonel John Chambers; W. R. Clayton, *Esq.*; Sir Robert Colquhoun, K.C.B. (H.M.'s late Political Agent and Consul-General, Egypt); Thomas D. Edwards, *Esq.*; Robert Ward Jackson, *Esq.*; John Lampray, *Esq.*; Capt. Herbert Mildmay; G. Manners, *Esq.*; Drummond Smith, *Esq.*; Baron Skribaunec (Captain in the Austrian Navy); Geo. Webster, *Esq.*; William Walker, *Esq.*; Sir Henry D. Wolff.

ACCESSIONS TO THE LIBRARY SINCE THE LAST MEETING, FEB. 12TH, 1866.—‘*Sur la Possibilité d’atteindre le Pole Nord,*’ par M. Charles Martin. ‘*Report on the Pearl-Oyster Beds in the Persian Gulf,*’ by Lieut.-Colonel Pelly. ‘*Coup-d’œil sur quelques points de l’Histoire générale des peuples Slaves, et leurs voisins les Turcs et les Finnois,*’ par M. A. Viquesnel. ‘*The Negro and Jamaica,*’ by Commr. B. Pim, R.N., &c. ‘*Observations on the People inhabiting Spain,*’ by H. J. C. Beavan, *Esq.* All presented by their respective authors. ‘*Tables of the Sun’s true bearing or Azimuth, from Sunrise to Sunset,*’ by J. Burwood, Staff-Commr. R.N.; presented by the Admiralty. Continuations of Journals, Periodicals, &c. &c.

ACCESSIONS OF MAPS SINCE THE LAST MEETING.—A Meteorological Diagram, showing the daily elements throughout the year 1865, by C. O. Cator, M.A. A tracing of Paylon Harbour, in the state of Ecuador, South America. The World, showing the limits of the Vegetable Kingdom, by Professor Dr. A. Grisebach. Ordnance Maps, 133 sheets.

The PRESIDENT, in reference to the interesting account which was given at the last meeting of the Society by Colonel Rigby and Colonel Playfair concerning certain Englishmen who are held in captivity by the Somālī, announced that Colonel Rigby had drawn up a paper on the subject, which would be communicated at the next meeting of the Society, and he (the President) hoped the result would be to stimulate the Foreign Office to take some steps to procure the release of these unfortunate men, who are said to be still in the interior of the Somālī country.

The Paper of the evening was—

1. *An Exploration of the River Purús.* By W. CHANDLESS, *Esq.*, M.A.

MR. CHANDLESS, whilst travelling in South America, resolved to attempt, unaided, the exploration of the Purús—a river which had hitherto baffled all endeavours to trace its course, although results of the highest commercial and political importance were anticipated to follow should it prove a navigable stream. Native Brazilian traders from the Amazons had ascended the river for a long distance and found no obstructions to navigation; and it was naturally concluded that this stream supplied the great desideratum of an easy means of communication between the eastern parts of Peru (sepa-